

SPOON-FED

- ECHOES OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM -

DE TYRANNY VERDRYVEN

A Plea for Breaking Toxic Intergenerational Patterns

[Phase 7](#)

*To all those who courageously break the silence and strive in the fight for respect
and justice within every layer of our society.*

THE DEBRIEFING¹

"I want to tell you one more thing and ask you one thing.

I tell you: everything that has been said here tonight stays here. No one will hear from us that you have spoken and what you have said. Everything that has been written will be destroyed by us. I assure you. Your commander, the officer evaluating you, will hear or read nothing about this night. Your conduct tonight will not affect your evaluation.

What I ask of you is this: do not put on a tough or fierce front to your colleagues. People who have spoken often resort to distorting the truth to compensate. Do not do that. You may talk to anyone about it if you wish. But remain honest."

- Order of Battle Officer², [MID/MIVD](#) -

¹ Guidelines for prisoner of war interrogation exercises, January 1978 edition (letter C-LAS/BLS, no. 13.929, 4 April 1978): <https://web.archive.org/web/20240219231021/https://www.militairespectator.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/uitgaven/1980/1980-0107-01-0032.PDF>

² Order of Battle Officer is specifically responsible for collecting, classifying, and analyzing all information obtained from documents, notes, and interrogations to provide insight into the order of battle of the participants. His task is to determine what has been learned during the exercise about the organization and deployment of his own troops.

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Foreword

In a world that increasingly demands equality and justice, this document offers a critical and in-depth look at the undercurrents of institutional racism and the complexity of human interactions within our societal structures. "Spoon-Fed: A Plea for Breaking Toxic Intergenerational Patterns" has emerged from a need to break the silence and shed light on the subtle, yet profound effects of racism that have been ingrained through generations.

This document is not merely a collection of personal reflections; it is an invitation to the reader to explore the deeper layers of our collective consciousness together. The goal is to stimulate a dialogue that goes beyond superficial discussions and challenges the reader to reflect on their own role within these dynamics.

By addressing a series of themes, from the subtle power dynamics in our daily interactions to the intergenerational patterns that shape us, this document aims to create awareness and lay the foundation for change. It acknowledges the struggles associated with confronting our own biases and the systemic structures that constrain us, and it offers a vision of how we can break these cycles of pain and oppression.

The stories and analyses shared in this document are intended to inform, inspire, and ultimately contribute to a society in which justice, empathy, and humanity are at the core. It is a call to action for everyone who believes in the power of change and is willing to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and just world.

As the author of this document, I invite you to embark on this journey with an open mind and a willing heart. Let's explore, learn, and grow together in the hope that our collective efforts will lead to a future where respect and equality are not just aspirations, but realities.

Human Nature

Imagine if within every group in our society, whether it be a governmental agency, a corporation, a civic initiative, or even a circle of friends, everyone acted flawlessly. In such a utopian world, detailed structures or systems might be unnecessary. However, reality shows us that no one is perfect, regardless of the setting. This acknowledgment of our human nature highlights the importance of well-thought-out systems that help us cope with our greatest challenge: our own mistakes and shortcomings.

Just like in formal organizations, informal groups and society as a whole need structures that protect us against our own blunders. People are capable of incredible things, but they also tend to make mistakes, act irrationally, and sometimes engage in an unhealthy quest for or retention of power.

Instead of striving for unrealistic perfection, it is more realistic and constructive to acknowledge that people are inherently imperfect. This principle is evident in all layers of society, from the governance of a country to the dynamics within a group of friends. Striving for balance, sharing power, and promoting collaboration are essential to ensure that every group functions in a manner that respects our complex human nature.

In every group or community, what we aim to prevent is sometimes just as important as what we aim to achieve. The ideal of flawless individuals is an illusion that ignores our fundamental, often unpredictable human nature. Our systems, though far from perfect, recognize and embrace this complexity and offer a balanced approach for functioning and cooperating.

This leads us to the subtle and often invisible ways in which power manifests and can derail within any group. In an environment where teamwork and trust are essential, the consequences of improper use or abuse of power can be profound. It's often not a matter of blatant power abuse, but rather daily interactions, decisions, and attitudes that, however subtle, can undermine the core of a group.

In practice, we see that individuals can use their position within a group to influence or dominate others, or that principles of respect and equality are ignored. These issues are not always visible but can hide in the shadows of our daily routines and decision-making processes.

The success of any group, whether it be a governmental organization, a corporation, or a circle of friends, strongly depends on the strength of collaboration. Any disruption in the power balance can lead to a weakening of group cohesion, reduced effectiveness, and in some cases, even risks. Therefore, it is crucial to remain vigilant about these dynamics and to strive for a culture in which power is exercised responsibly, transparently, and ethically. This requires dialogue, self-reflection, and a commitment to our core values. Only through these efforts can we maintain a strong, coherent, and ethical culture that enables us to perform optimally in any composition.

Professional Dissonance

Professional dissonance reveals a profound paradox within our society and professional environments. It contrasts with the well-known phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, in which an individual experiences internal conflicts between their beliefs, values, or behaviours. Traditionally, this leads to an adjustment of the individual to reduce the inner dissonance.

However, in professional dissonance, the conflict does not lie within the individual, but between the individual and their external environment. This arises when a person, who acts in accordance with fundamental values such as equality and non-discrimination - as enshrined in Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution - is confronted with a work environment or society that does not reflect or respect these values. The result is an external dissonance, where the individual remains consistent with their values, while the environment is in conflict with them.

The core of this paradox is that the struggle is not about adapting the individual to the environment, but about aligning the environment with fundamental human values and rights. It calls for a review of professional norms and organizational cultures, aimed at creating inclusive, respectful, and equitable work environments.

The implications of professional dissonance touch on crucial issues of social responsibility, individual well-being, and the role of the state and organizations in promoting a healthy society. It emphasizes that many problems experienced by individuals are not purely personal, but deeply rooted in societal and institutional structures.

An excessive focus on individual resilience and adaptability, without addressing the underlying societal and organizational problems that cause stress, discrimination, and injustice, can lead to unhealthy dynamics. This requires a systematic and structural approach to create an environment where everyone is treated equally and discrimination and injustice are not tolerated.

Acknowledging professional dissonance as a legitimate and important issue is a step towards change. It provides a framework for understanding the interactions between individual values and societal structures and highlights the need for a more inclusive, equitable and supportive society.

In summary, professional dissonance calls for a fundamental shift in how we think about and respond to the gap between individual values and the practices within our work environments and wider society. It argues that it is not the individual who needs to change, but the structures that surround them, with the responsibility resting on the state and organizations to create a just and supportive environment for all.

In continuing our exploration of professional dissonance, we delve deeper into the complexities of this concept through two crucial themes: "[Lessons from 'The Gulag Archipelago'](#)" and "[The Dilemma of Personal Freedom and Professional Obligation](#)." These themes provide rich context for understanding the nuances of professional dissonance and how it manifests itself in both extreme and everyday circumstances. By analysing "The Gulag Archipelago," we reveal the harrowing consequences of "[Systemic Injustices](#)" and the struggle for moral integrity under pressure from repressive systems.

On the other hand, the dilemma of personal freedom versus professional obligations highlights the contemporary challenges individuals face in balancing their personal values with the demands of their professional roles. Together, these themes provide a foundation for deepening our understanding of professional dissonance, underscoring how essential it is to create structures that support both individual integrity and collective responsibility. This is in line with both the "Joint Statement against Racism and Discrimination by the Dutch Police" and the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution.

Systemic Fortress

In 2002, during my years of service in the army, I found myself with my team in an underground observation post, discreetly nestled within the landscape and hidden from the enemy's view, aimed at monitoring the enemy's stronghold. This was a place of intense reflection and deep conversation, where the line between enemy and ally often blurred in the shadows of our shared humanity. We talked about power and manipulation, about leadership and ethics, and how important it is to lead without falling into manipulative behaviour or abuse of power. My former team commander, whose insights were later recognized with the Military Order of William, shared with us the complexity of ethical power and the creeping dangers of unethical power structures.

After 22 years, my understanding of 'the enemy's stronghold' has evolved. The true bulwark we were fighting was not so much a physical enemy as the 'systemic fortress' - a metaphor for the institutional and structural barriers that hold back change and progress. This stronghold, rooted in traditions and power dynamics, is symbolic of the challenges we face in striving for equality and implementing Article 1 at every level of society.

The fight against this stronghold is not only a fight against external structures, but also an internal struggle against the cognitive dissonance that comes from a lifetime of facing racism and discrimination. However, this personal struggle also reflects the inner conflicts within the 'systemic fortress' itself. The individuals within this structure are in a state of cognitive dissonance, driven by a desire to be loved and appreciated, while at the same time struggling with the limitations of their own vision and goals.

As time passes, the ideals with which they entered their positions are overshadowed by the reality of unfulfilled ambitions. This inevitable confrontation with the limitations of their power and the complexity of leading to real change leads to a deep disappointment and a sense of cynicism. This cynicism, stemming from the inability to realize the stated goals, undermines the basis of their original intentions and causes a detrimental impact on the organization and its members.

The solution to this vicious cycle of dissonance and cynicism lies in redefining success, not by the speed of change, but by its quality and depth. Implementing Article 1 from the founding principles of our education - from primary school to every government institution - is a step towards a society in which the values of equality and inclusivity are deeply rooted. The alphabet of our future must begin with Article 1, as a symbol of our shared humanity and our collective responsibility to create a more just and ethical world.

This story is not only a reflection on my personal journey, but also a call to action for all of us. By lifting each other up and not tearing each other down, we can work together to break down the walls of the 'systemic fortress' and build a future in which everyone is given the space to realize his or her potential. This is the challenge that lies ahead, and it is up to us to face it with open arms and determined hearts.

Breaking the Cycle

I did not write this document because I am afraid to speak openly. On the contrary, expressing my thoughts openly puts me in a vulnerable position, which I find extremely difficult. The problem goes beyond just expressing it; it cuts deeper. It is painful to see that although my feelings and experiences are recognized, the real wrongs of [2006](#) and the foundation of injustice that fuels these feelings are overlooked. My deepest wish is a full acknowledgment of these events, an assumption of responsibility, and the recognition that this should never have happened. However, this form of recognition is not forthcoming, which fills me with anger.

The reason for this document is a complex situation, underlined by an incident in early 2024, which exposes the depth of personal and social suffering. The situation is further complicated by the echo of unresolved pain from the past, particularly those from [1998](#) and [1981](#), which increases the emotional burden.

It's ironic that my anger is acknowledged, but doesn't lead to any change. It seems that my anger is the only thing that is seen, while the actual problem is ignored. This is at the heart of my frustration and the reason for writing this document: an attempt to provide deeper insight into my feelings and situation, in the hope that people will finally be genuinely listened to and take responsibility.

The key to breaking this cycle of frustration and the call for change lies in implementing Article 1 from the foundations of our society - from primary school to every government institution. This is crucial for building a society in which equality and inclusivity are deeply rooted in the fabric of society. The starting point must be Article 1, as a fundamental symbol of our shared humanity and shared responsibility, to shape a more just and ethical world.

This desire for change is not just for me personally; It is a legacy for future generations. It is a call to action, a desire to offer them a world where the principles of equality and respect for everyone's dignity are instilled from an early age. It is a dream that I cherish, with the hope that future generations will not have to fight the same battle, but grow up in a society that teaches them to live and act according to Article 1 from the beginning.

Institutional Gaslighting

In my journey to address and highlight the pervasive issues within our public sector - specifically regarding microaggressions³, discrimination, and the implementation of Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution - I created a document that embodies my deep concerns and the collective need for a systemic overhaul. This document, a culmination of my experiences and observations, has been meticulously shared with key figures and departments, including Mayor Halsema of Amsterdam, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the Ministry of Justice and Security.

Throughout this process, I have encountered what can only be described as a form of institutional gaslighting⁴. This realization dawned upon me as my earnest efforts and genuine concerns often seemed to vanish into the bureaucratic ether, leaving me questioning my own perceptions and the validity of the issues I raised. My communications, marked by a fervent desire for change and improvement within the safety regions and our broader societal structures, appeared to be met with responses - or, at times, a lack thereof - that subtly invalidated my concerns or suggested an overestimation of their gravity.

This experience of institutional gaslighting has been both frustrating and illuminating. It revealed to me the profound challenge of voicing concerns within a system that, by its very nature, seems designed to resist introspection and reform. Despite presenting well-documented evidence and engaging in dialogue with those positioned to enact change, the lack of meaningful action or acknowledgment has often felt like a deliberate attempt to undermine the seriousness of my concerns.

Engaging with Mayor Halsema, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the Ministry of Justice and Security, I anticipated a partnership in addressing these systemic issues. Instead, the journey has underscored the complexities of challenging institutional norms and the loneliness of advocating for change in an environment that, at times, seems intent on preserving the status quo.

This realization of institutional gaslighting is not just a personal epiphany but a call to action. It underscores the necessity for institutions to not only listen but to actively engage with the concerns raised by their constituents. The fight for a more inclusive, equitable, and respectful society is far from over, and acknowledging the existence of institutional gaslighting is a critical step toward dismantling the barriers to true systemic change.

And yet, the irony is not lost on me that, in highlighting these systemic issues, there lies a risk of being labelled a 'conspiracy theorist' by those who wish to dismiss or minimize the concerns raised. This potential misinterpretation is, in itself, a testament to the very essence of institutional gaslighting - where the act of questioning and seeking accountability can be twisted into an unfounded narrative of paranoia. It is important to clarify that my critique focuses on systemic dynamics and power imbalances, not on conspiracies or a belief that everyone is against me. The challenge lies not in individual animosities but in the structural complexities that inhibit meaningful change and dialogue.

In navigating these waters, it is crucial to maintain a clear distinction between legitimate concerns rooted in evidence and the unwarranted scepticism that dismisses all authority as malevolent. The goal is not to undermine trust in our institutions indiscriminately but to foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and, ultimately, reform. This is a call for introspection within our systems, a plea for those in positions of power to listen genuinely and act decisively for the betterment of society as a whole.

³ Racial microaggressions in everyday life: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17516773/>

⁴ Institutional Betrayal and Gaslighting: <https://nursing.ceconnection.com/ovidfiles/00005237-201801000-00014.pdf>

Dear Mayor Halsema

05-02-2024 21:14

Reference Number 6313-7986

Dear Mayor Halsema,

As a resident of Amsterdam and an employee of the fire brigade in another safety region, I take the initiative to bring an issue of great importance to your attention. Throughout my eighteen-year career, I have witnessed subtle forms of microaggression, which not only undermine the well-being of individuals but also affect inclusivity within our organization. These observations prompted me to write a document that addresses the problems within government organizations, with an explicit focus on the implementation of Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution in our professional codes.

With this letter, I urge you, in your capacity as mayor of Amsterdam, to take the lead in this matter in cooperation with the Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Department. It is my conviction that the Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Brigade, with its distinguished reputation and innovative approaches, is ideally suited to act as a pioneer in the implementation of Article 1 in the professional codes and the drafting and signing of a joint statement against discrimination and racism.

By taking these steps, Amsterdam can take on a leading role, not only within our own region but also as an example for other security regions and municipal organizations in the Netherlands. This initiative would send a strong signal about the importance of an active engagement against discrimination and for promoting inclusivity.

The challenge of implementing these changes at the national level is considerable, given the diversity and autonomy of the 25 security regions. However, by starting locally and breaking the current impasse without prior consultation with other regions, we can start a movement that extends beyond our own borders. Amsterdam has the unique opportunity to serve as a beacon of light and hope in these times of change, and your leadership is crucial in doing so.

I urge you to seriously consider my document, which I enclose, and to use it as a foundation for further discussion and action within the City of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Department. This call is based on a deep conviction that, through collaboration and leadership, we can shape a more just and inclusive society.

Although I prefer anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter and my personal situation, I trust in your discretion and hope for your understanding and support.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this vital issue and am confident that your leadership will play a key role in advancing Amsterdam and the Amsterdam-Amstelland Fire Department in this important area.

Sincerely,
A concerned resident

Politics

The Great Director of Polarization and Tribalism

When we consider the influence of politics on the phenomena of polarization and tribalism, we enter an area that is both fascinating and worrying. Politics, in its most basic form, is about controlling power and steering society in a direction that is considered desirable. But what happens when this noble enterprise turns into an arena in which winning power seems to be the only goal?

In this scenario, polarization becomes not only a consequence but also an instrument. Political leaders and parties are quickly discovering that emphasizing differences, demonizing the "other," and cultivating an "us versus them" mentality can be an extremely effective strategy for mobilizing their base and staying in power. This use of polarization as a political tool serves two purposes: it consolidates one's own supporters by presenting a clear enemy, and it paralyzes the possibility of dialogue and compromise with the opposing side. In such a climate, any attempt at bridging or understanding is seen as a betrayal of one's own cause.

It is at this time that the influence of toxic intergenerational patterns, particularly racism and discrimination, comes to the fore. These patterns, often unconsciously passed down from generation to generation, can be further reinforced by political rhetoric and policy, increasing societal polarization and the challenges of bridging it.

Tribalism within political parties and their supporters only reinforces this phenomenon. Within these groups, critical thinking is often sacrificed on the altar of party loyalty. This leads to a situation where members of the group no longer individually evaluate what is true or what is best for society, but blindly follow the party line. This dynamic is further amplified by the echo chambers of social media, where information (or disinformation) confirming one's own beliefs is amplified, while dissenting voices are filtered or demonized.

The danger of these developments is that they not only affect the political arena, but permeate all levels of society. They nurture a culture in which truth becomes relative and facts are subordinate to beliefs. This undermines the foundations of democratic decision-making, which must be based on an informed and rational discussion of the common good.

What can we do about this? Part of the answer lies in the revaluation of civil society in politics. This does not mean that we should all think alike, but it does mean that we should recognize that compromise and dialogue are not only necessary, but desirable. It requires leaders who are willing to look past the short-term gains of polarization and have the courage to build bridges.

In addition, it is essential that citizens become aware of the mechanisms of polarization and tribalism and arm themselves against them by continuing to think critically, consult different sources and be open to dialogue with people who think differently. This is no easy task in an age of information overload and ubiquitous social media, but it is essential for maintaining a healthy, democratic society.

Seen in this light, the role of politics in fuelling polarization and tribalism is both a warning and a call to action. It reminds us that democracy requires a delicate balance that requires constant maintenance and attention. It is up to all of us to rise to this challenge, not only as voters, but also as active participants in the public debate, constantly striving for a more inclusive and understanding society.

Toxic Intergenerational Patterns

In our quest for self-awareness and social improvement, we encounter the deep-rooted phenomenon of toxic intergenerational patterns. These patterns, which are passed down across generations, encompass a broad spectrum of behaviours and beliefs that affect the emotional and social structure of individuals and communities. With a special focus on the subtle but profound role of racism and discrimination, we highlight how these biases can be unconsciously inculcated in the younger generation, thereby contributing to the continuation of institutional and cultural bias.

In this context, I share a personal story, entitled "[Spoon-fed: The Legacy of Institutional Racism \(1981\)](#)," as an illustration of how such patterns played a role early in my life. This story serves not only as an introduction to the complexities of the subject matter, but also as a springboard for a more in-depth discussion of the variety of toxic intergenerational patterns that affect our workplaces and wider society. It is my hope that by sharing these reflections, we can collectively take steps towards a more conscious and inclusive future, where breaking these cycles is central

Professional Dissonance: Lessons from 'The Gulag Archipelago'

In light of the introduction to professional dissonance, "The Gulag Archipelago" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reveals the deep and often disturbing parallels between historical extremes and the contemporary professional dilemmas we experience. These parallels force us to reflect on the essential themes of moral and ethical integrity in the face of systemic injustices.

In the horrific world of the Gulag, a place of extreme oppression and human suffering, individuals faced the ultimate test of survival versus moral integrity. This struggle reflects, on an extreme level, the essence of professional dissonance, where individuals in today's work environment must also navigate between their personal values and the demands of external systems that sometimes fundamentally conflict with these values.

At the heart of Solzhenitsyn's critique - the role of the state and organizational structures in forming a repressive system - resonates with the call for a rethinking of our current professional norms and organizational cultures. It emphasizes the need for structures that not only respect but actively promote individual values and human rights.

The lessons we learn from "The Gulag Archipelago" go beyond a historical account; They are an urgent call to action for systematic and structural change in our own time. These changes are essential to creating a work environment in which individual values and integrity can flourish, free from the repressive dynamics that Solzhenitsyn so powerfully described.

While "The Gulag Archipelago" offers a window into the extremes of human suffering and resilience, it reminds us that the struggle for integrity, respect for personal values, and just systems are universal themes. These themes transcend time and place, and are a crucial consideration for how we shape our social and organizational structures today.

The discussion of professional dissonance and the lessons of "The Gulag Archipelago" call us to an in-depth reflection on the way our social and organizational structures are designed. They highlight the need for all of us - individuals and communities - to raise our voices and actively work towards a more just and honest world. This requires an ongoing commitment to bridging the gap between the ideals we cherish and the realities of our day-to-day professional environments.

The Dilemma of Personal Freedom and Professional Obligations

After exploring the similarities between the extreme conditions in "The Gulag Archipelago" and the contemporary challenges of professional dissonance, it is crucial to explore the practical applications of these insights. This segment highlights the complex relationship between individual freedom and professional obligation, and explores the essential role of ethical guidelines and public policies in shaping a fair work environment.

Individual freedom vs. Professional obligations

The balance between personal autonomy and professional dependency poses a significant challenge in our pursuit of equity in the workplace. In our private lives, we can often avoid situations that conflict with our values, but in our professional role, we are bound by the structures and expectations of our work environment. This reality highlights the importance of built-in protection mechanisms within organizations.

The importance of professional codes

Establishing professional codes, rooted in fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution, is essential for creating a respectful and safe working environment. These guidelines not only serve as a guide for ethical conduct, but also provide protection against potential injustices.

The role of the government

The government plays a crucial role in defining and enforcing these ethical standards. As a regulator and often as an employer, the government has a responsibility to implement policies that promote equity and integrity in all professional domains. This calls for a proactive approach to combat discrimination and promote a culture of fairness.

Work environments as metaphorical 'Gulag Archipelagos'

The comparison of certain work environments with the 'Gulag Archipelagos' sheds light on the serious consequences of economic dependence and the need for fundamental reforms to ensure fair working conditions. It requires significant efforts and systemic changes, not only from individual companies but from society as a whole.

Conclusion

This section emphasizes the need for a concerted effort by individuals, businesses, and government to create work environments that support economic prosperity and moral integrity. By developing and adhering to codes of ethics that align with our core values and the principles of Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution, we strive to create a professional environment where justice, respect, and equality are at the heart of every interaction.

SPOON-FED

The Legacy of Institutional Racism (1981)

Zwarte Piet, in his current well-known form, only truly became part of Dutch culture in 1891, 27 years after the abolition of slavery in the Netherlands. This was a period when racist ideas were still widely accepted. This is reflected in children's books from that era that depicted racial stereotypes, stereotypes that were taught to children from a young age. Some of these books include:

- [*Van tien kleine nikkertjes \(1947\) - A. van Breda*](#)
- [*Moortje Nikker in Luilekkerland \(1949\) - P. Henrard*](#)
- [*Oki en Doki bij de nikkers \(1957\) - H. Arnoldus*](#)

Initially, there was no protest against the work of H. Arnoldus. However, as Dutch society became more diverse, the term 'nikkers' began to evoke more resistance. In response, the publisher softened the title in 1971 to 'Oki and Doki among the negroes'. But even this title eventually became inappropriate. Since 1982, the book has been known as 'Oki and Doki on the Island'.

Of the above titles, I only recognize the last title and cover. We had to read this booklet out loud together in class at the time. I remember this well because it was an intense experience.

My turn to read was approaching, and I kept looking back and forth between the cover of the booklet and the page we were on. I did this constantly. I tried to understand why the characters were drawn in a certain way. I was looking for a logic that I did not know at the time. I had never heard of racism and wondered, "Why are they depicted in this way?" "Why do these figures, who look like me, appear so different from the children around me?"

12-hour interrogation MID/MIVD: Institutional Racism in Its Rawest Form Breaking the Silence (1998)

There I stand, at the onset of what would become a 12-hour interrogation, a moment immortalized in a photograph that will remain unforgettable. The mask is momentarily lifted, providing a brief pause from the anonymity it grants me, just enough for the camera to capture his tale.

The humiliation doesn't start with physical hardships but with psychological warfare aimed at my very soul, my identity. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a book filled with symbols of racial struggle and injustice, becomes my companion in this gloom. It's not just any book; it's a tool wielded to shatter my resistance, to coerce me into becoming something I refuse to be.

The deepest humiliation arrives when I am stripped naked, deprived of any shield that separates me from others' stares. There I stand, an object of mockery and degradation, before my interrogators, including a woman. Being forced to read passages from the book in such a state is designed to belittle me, to reduce me to nothing more than my skin colour and the history it signifies.

I am seething with anger. Not just because of the humiliation I've endured, but also due to the ease with which these tactics are applied. Racism, the vilest means to break a person, is employed as a weapon. And as I stand there, naked, exposed, with nothing but my rank, name, and number to cling to, I grasp the magnitude of the battle I am engaged in. It's not just against my interrogators; it's against a system that sanctions such humiliations, deeming them justified.

Yet, in this darkest hour, I find strength. Strength in my refusal to bend, not to read, not to succumb under the pressure. I might be furious, but I am not broken. And while I may one day speak of these experiences, I refuse to let them define me. I am more than this moment, more than this debasement. I am a person of dignity, no matter what is stripped from me.

MIVD: In-depth investigation into the Practices of Military Interrogation and the Role of Institutional Racism

In the rigorous and relentless atmosphere of the elementary commando course, there exists a deeply rooted protocol, a methodology designed to demand the utmost from candidates in terms of endurance and resilience. This strict regime leaves nothing to chance; every procedure, tactic, and strategy is meticulously orchestrated by experienced instructors and intelligence experts.

The primary objective of these instructors is unshakeably set: to identify the most capable individuals by exposing every possible vulnerability. Their pursuit is not limited to testing physical capabilities; they primarily focus on examining psychological resilience and an unwavering spirit. Throughout this intensive process, an individual is reduced to their essential core, transformed into someone who not only stands firm in the most extreme situations imaginable but also excels.

In the lead-up to the interrogations⁵, the instruction team compiles detailed personal dossiers on each participant. These dossiers, assembled with insights into individual strengths and weaknesses, serve as the foundation for the interrogation teams of the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD). Every aspect of these dossiers is deliberately composed to provide for a tailored interrogation scenario. For individuals with an ethnic or racial background, this introduces an additional dimension of complexity, marked by institutional discrimination.

This discrimination is not incidental; it is a systematic approach, an integral part of the interrogation protocol that purposefully utilizes racial and ethnic sensitivities. This constitutes a stark evidence of embedded institutional racism within defence structures, actively deployed as a tactic within the training.

The interrogation session itself, an exhausting marathon of 12 hours, tests both the physical and mental stamina of the candidate. Supported by a team of interrogators, guards, and medical staff, each participant is subjected to an unceasing stream of intensive questions and scenarios. The end of this marathon is as elusive as its beginning, with a blurred line between reality and ongoing interrogation, resulting in a state of total confusion and disorientation.

While these techniques may be intended to assess resilience and resistance to pressure, they veer towards a more sinister dimension when coloured by racial bias. The premeditation and institutionalization of such racially biased tactics within the protocols of the MIVD indicate an alarming level of systematic racism.

The reluctance to disclose these practices and the government's fear of the implications of such revelations testify to the impact of this story. This account illuminates not just individual experiences but also uncovers a fundamental flaw within our defence and intelligence apparatuses. The revelation of this reality not only confronts institutional racism but also serves as an urgent call for accountability, recognition, and ultimately, significant reforms.

⁵ *Richtlijnen ten behoeve van krijgsgevangenenondervragingsoefeningen*, uitgave januari 1978 (brief C-LAS/BLS, nr. 13.929, 4 april 1978): <https://web.archive.org/web/20240219231021/https://www.militairespectator.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/uitgaven/1980/1980-0107-01-0032.PDF>

8 Stages Toward Unity: Navigating the Path of Societal Recovery Through the Generations

Phase 1: Era of Slavery and Colonialism

- **Period:** Begins in the 16th century with European explorations and lasts until the 19th century.
- **Important dates and events**
 - 1602: Establishment of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), focused on trade and colonial expansion in Asia.
 - 1621: Establishment of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), active in the transatlantic slave trade.
 - 17th and 18th centuries: Culmination of Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade through the WIC.
 - 17th and 18th centuries: VOC dominates the spice trade and establishes extensive colonial rule in Asia, particularly in what is now Indonesia.
- **Impact and activities**
 - **VOC:**
 - Trade Network: Developed an extensive trade network in Asia, including trading posts and colonies in Indonesia, India, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).
 - Slavery in Asia: Used slave labour to maintain plantations, work in forts, and domestic chores within their Asian colonies. These slaves were obtained through war, trade, or as a punishment.
 - Cultural and Economic Impact: Had a lasting impact on local economies and cultures in Asia, including changes in agricultural systems and the introduction of new crops.
 - **WIC:**
 - Transatlantic Slave Trade: The WIC transported millions of Africans as slaves to the Americas. These people were forcibly taken from West Africa to plantations in South America, the Caribbean and North America.
 - Colonial Expansion: The WIC played a key role in colonial expansion by establishing colonies and trading posts in the Americas and West Africa, including Suriname and the Caribbean. They also established trading posts and forts along the West African coast, central to the trade of slaves, gold, and other goods.
 - Social and Demographic Impact: The slave trade and colonial activities of the WIC had profound impacts on the societies involved, including the disruption of African communities and the creation of the African diaspora in the Americas.

Phase 2: Abolition of Slavery and Beginning of Awareness

- **Period:** 19th century
- **Important date:** 1863, official abolition of slavery in Dutch colonies.
- **Characteristics:** Beginning of the recognition of equal rights, although the aftermath of slavery and colonialism continues to affect society for a long time.

Phase 3: Increasing awareness and decolonization

- **Period:** Mid-20th century
- **Characteristics:** After the Second World War and the subsequent decolonization processes, awareness of human rights and the need to fight racism is growing.

Phase 4: Legislation and policy changes

- **Period:** 1960-1983
- **Important dates:**
 - 1971, introduction of the Equal Pay Act, aimed at combating discrimination on the basis of sex but also relevant to the broader fight against discrimination.
 - 1983, amendment of the Dutch Constitution to explicitly prohibit discrimination on any ground in Article 1.
- **Features:** Focus on creating a legal framework to combat discrimination and racism, including the development of specific anti-discrimination laws.

Phase 5: Acknowledging Racism and Increasing Social Awareness

- **Period:** 1983-2020
- **Important dates:**
 - 1994, introduction of the General Equal Treatment Act (AWGB), aimed at prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, belief, political affiliation, race, sex, nationality, heterosexual or homosexual orientation or marital status.

Phase 6: Acknowledging Institutional Racism

- **Period:** 2020-2024
- **Characterize:**
- **Important events:**
 - **2020:** Increased attention to institutional racism, partly due to the global Black Lives Matter movements and the childcare benefits scandal in the Netherlands, in which institutional racism played a central role.
 - **May 25, 2020:** The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA, sparks worldwide protests against racism and police brutality, including in the Netherlands. This moment marks a global call for reflection and action against institutional racism.
 - **July 1, 2020:** Ketí Koti, the commemoration of the abolition of slavery in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles in 1863, coincides with a national debate on institutional racism in the Netherlands. This coincidence reinforces the symbolic importance of the day and emphasizes the ongoing fight against racism and discrimination.
 - **February 17, 2023:** Constitutional amendment amending Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution to more explicitly prohibit discrimination on any grounds, including disability and sexual orientation. This amendment highlights the Dutch government's commitment to fighting discrimination and promoting equality for all citizens.
- Deeper understanding of the complexities of racism: This stage is characterized by a deeper understanding of the complexities of racism, including the recognition of institutional racism. There has been an increase in social awareness and actions aimed at tackling both visible and invisible forms of racism.
- Actions aimed at recognition and address: The focus is on acknowledging and addressing institutional racism, including taking responsibility for the harm done to affected families and initiating steps to prevent such forms of discrimination in the future. The constitutional amendment of 17 February 2023 serves as an important symbolic and legal foundation for further actions against discrimination.

Phase 7: Active approach and transformation

- **Period:** From 2024 to present
- **Characterize:**
 - **Focus on breaking intergenerational patterns:** This phase is characterized by a deep commitment to breaking intergenerational patterns of discrimination and racism. There is a broad recognition of the need to address not only institutional racism, but also the underlying social and cultural factors that perpetuate racism and discrimination.
 - **Efforts to raise awareness:** Various programs and initiatives are launched aimed at raising awareness about racism, inclusivity and diversity at all levels of society.
 - **Educational programs and structural changes:** The focus is on education and implementing structural changes within educational institutions, government organizations, and the business community to promote a more inclusive society.
 - **Implementation of Article 1 in professional codes:** A crucial aspect of this phase is the integration of the principles of Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution, which prohibits discrimination on any grounds, into the professional codes of various sectors. This symbolizes a commitment to a fundamental standard of equality and respect for all.

Integration of Article 1 into teaching practices

- Centralizing Article 1 in education means creating an environment where respect for diversity and the rejection of discrimination are intrinsic values. This integration provides a practical basis for developing a society rooted in equality and inclusivity.

The healing effect of the concept of Peaceful School (Vreedzame School)

- **Social and emotional support:** Children from all family situations receive essential social and emotional support within the framework of a peaceful school. This strengthens their cognitive, emotional, and social development, regardless of their home situation.
- **Peer support and positive role models:** The concept fosters a culture of empathy, respect, and collaboration among students. This encourages children to support each other and serves as a foundation for developing positive role models, who will take these values into their home environment.
- **Positive impact on the home environment:** The principles and behaviours that children learn in school can have a transformative effect on the home environment. This presents a unique opportunity for positive change within families, driven by the children's development and exemplary behaviour.
- **Long-term vision at the community level:** The early implementation of these educational principles contributes to the formation of a society that recognizes the value of diversity and actively fights discrimination and racism. It lays the groundwork for future generations to grow up as informed, empathetic citizens who contribute to an inclusive community.

The Role of the Peaceful School Concept in Social Recovery

The concept of the peaceful school transcends the traditional model of education by providing an integrated approach where children learn to live and work in a society that celebrates diversity and rejects discrimination. This concept acts as a catalyst for societal recovery, with education serving as a means to break down intergenerational patterns of discrimination and promote a culture of respect and equality.

This approach recognises the potential of each child to contribute to positive change within their own living environment, which in turn influences wider societal structures. By educating children in the principles of Article 1 from an early age, we lay the foundation for a society in which everyone, regardless of background or personal circumstances, is valued and respected. The transformation to a more inclusive society requires a long-term commitment and a holistic approach, in which education plays a crucial role. The concept of the peaceful school offers a promising path forward, laying the foundation for sustainable social change and fostering a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect.

Phase 8: Normalization of Equality and Universal Consciousness

- **Period:** Future-oriented from 202x onwards
- **Characterize:**
 - **Normalization of equality:** At this stage, equality is no longer seen as an ideal to strive for, but as a fundamental aspect of society. The concept of equality is fully integrated into all facets of social life, blurring distinctions that stem from race, ethnicity, or cultural differences. In this society, the notion that everyone is intrinsically equal is deeply ingrained and taken for granted by everyone.
 - **Pervasive awareness of racism:** Knowledge of and understanding of racism is universal. This means that everyone, regardless of background or level of education, understands what racism is, knows its history, and recognizes its impact on individuals and groups. This pervasive awareness allows people to speak openly and freely about racism, leading to a society that actively works to prevent and eradicate it.
 - **Inherently inclusivity:** Inclusivity is the norm in every stratum of society, from education and employment to leisure activities and politics. Differences in culture, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity are not barriers to participation or success. The richness of diversity is celebrated and seen as an essential contribution to society's dynamism and innovation.
 - **Constructive dialogue and ongoing education:** Open discussions about racism and discrimination are common and encouraged. These dialogues take place in schools, workplaces, and communities, supported by an ongoing commitment to education and awareness. This ensures that new generations grow up with a strong moral compass and the skills to contribute to a just society.
 - **Institutionalized justice:** The principles of equality and inclusivity are firmly enshrined in law, policy, and practice. Government institutions, businesses, and civil society organizations have clear guidelines and procedures in place to prevent and address discrimination, with a focus on reparation and reconciliation.
 - **Shared responsibility:** Striving for a society free from racism and discrimination is seen as a shared responsibility of all citizens. This creates a culture of mutual care and support, where people actively contribute to the well-being of others and the collective good.

Phase 8 symbolizes the realization of a society in which the fight against racism and discrimination has been successful and the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity have been fully realized. This phase marks the end of the persistent issues surrounding racism and the full acceptance of universal human dignity as the cornerstone of civilization.

ECHOES OF INJUSTICE

(1981-2024)

Unharmd on the Outside, Wounded Within (2006)

Sitting there, among colleagues you trust, rely on, everything changes suddenly when a single remark cuts through the air. A comment about race, a joke that brings nothing but pain. In that fraction of a second, you feel the atmosphere shift, the air thickens, loneliness embracing you amidst laughter.

It's laughter that echoes in your head, not of joy, but of denial. No matter the colour of your skin, the background you carry. At that moment, you feel different, isolated, as if you're not truly part of the group. You sense the glances, hear the whispers, and despite the laughter, you feel a distance instantly created.

It's more than just a joke. It's a reflection of what simmers beneath the surface, a revelation of hidden biases. You wonder, am I safe here? Am I valued for who I am, or am I merely tolerated despite who I am?

The struggle is both internal and external. You want to stand up, say something, but the words choke in your throat. You want to laugh, dismiss it as nothing, but your heart screams in protest. In these moments, the true nature of camaraderie is tested. Is this a place where I can be myself, or is this a place where I must be just a shadow of myself?

This experience leaves scars, invisible but deep. It changes how you view your colleagues, how you approach your work. But it also changes something in you. A realization that the fight against prejudice and discrimination lies not just in the streets but in the break rooms, in everyday conversations, in the 'innocent' jokes.

This isn't just an incident. It's a revelation of a deeper issue that needs attention. Not with more jokes, but with open and honest conversations. Because, in the end, we all strive for the same thing: to be respected, valued, and accepted, regardless of our colour, origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or physical appearance.

STANLEY as Code Word A Revelation of Everyday Racism

There we were, sitting around the coffee table, when a colleague decided to share a YouTube video. The clip showed a car, completely engulfed in flames, but astonishingly, a Stanley thermos had survived the fire. I couldn't help but comment on the impressive durability of these products, having had great experiences with them during my service time.

But then, out of nowhere, X made a remark that made me frown. He said something along the lines of, "If my daughter comes home with a Stanley, I'd never allow it." It was seemingly a light-hearted, mocking comment, but the racist undertone was unmistakable.

Let's be clear: what X said there is a textbook example of everyday racism, wrapped in a joke. By using 'Stanley' as a sort of codeword, he likely tried to mask his true intentions behind a

veil of humour. But we must be clear: such statements feed stereotypes and perpetuate a culture where racism is surreptitiously tolerated.

The danger of these kinds of 'jokes' is that they normalize what is fundamentally wrong. They create an environment where biases and discrimination sneakily become a part of our daily lives. That's why it's essential we don't ignore these comments. It's crucial to call them out and make them a topic of discussion, not only to raise awareness but ultimately to drive a change in behaviour.

"FINNEN" as a Codeword in Everyday Racism within the Dutch Context

Beyond the story of "Stanley," there exists another codeword that frequently surfaces in conversations and on social media within the Netherlands: "FINNEN". At first glance, this term innocuously refers to the people of Finland, emblematic of what many consider a quintessentially European nation. However, the context in which "FINNEN" is deployed unveils a deeper, more unsettling layer.

When individuals disparage "those damn FINNEN," they aren't critiquing Finns themselves. Instead, the term has been co-opted as a derogatory label for migrants or foreigners, typically from specific regions or countries. Thus, "FINNEN" morphs into a codeword, a cloaked articulation of xenophobia and racism.

This cunning utilization of "FINNEN" in both personal and online discourse achieves several objectives. Primarily, it allows for the veiled discussion of racist sentiments without immediate detection by social media platforms and their algorithms. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now known as X) actively scan for specific keywords to mitigate hate speech. Employing "FINNEN" enables individuals to bypass these safeguards, keeping their messages under the radar.

The strategic choice of codewords highlights a sophisticated mechanism for disseminating racist and xenophobic sentiments. It affords people the opportunity to express their biases without the direct social or legal repercussions associated with openly discriminatory language. This is particularly concerning as it fosters an environment where racism and xenophobia are not only normalized but also masked.

Remaining vigilant and enhancing our awareness of the usage of such codewords is imperative. By deciphering these terms and the contexts in which they are used, we can more effectively combat the insidious forms of racism and discrimination that pervade our society. Recognizing these codewords for what they truly are - vehicles for spreading harmful prejudices under the guise of innocuous conversation - is crucial.

It's important for English-speaking readers to understand that the misuse of "FINNEN" is a phenomenon specific to the Dutch language and societal context, reflecting a unique way in which everyday racism is veiled and perpetuated.

A Reflection in the Mirror of Society

There I was, the day after the elections, sitting at the coffee table at station X. We had just witnessed a remarkable election victory by Wilders' party. The commander, right in front of me, didn't mince his words when he started talking about Wilders and his views, especially those about foreigners. Now you should know, I was the only person of colour at that table. So yes, you get the picture, I didn't feel particularly comfortable.

I was intrigued by my colleague's choice to raise this subject in my presence. Provocative? Maybe. But it got me thinking about consciousness and choices in a mixed group. Imagine, I would be in a similar situation with colleagues of colour and one white colleague. A political party comes to power that advocates for fewer whites in Limburg. Would I, as a commander, throw this subject on the table? No, probably not.

This moment at the station was more than a conversation about politics. It was a confrontation with the underlying dynamics of how colleagues use their consciousness about ethnicity and politics. And let's face it, it was also a confrontation with myself. As a person of colour in an environment where political and racial issues are on edge, this was a typical example of the complexities and challenges we experience on a daily basis.

Engaging in an open and honest dialogue in a situation that is both uncomfortable and potentially controversial is not easy. But it's essential. This is not just about a colleague with a different political opinion. It's about navigating the complex realities of our workplace, where personal identity and societal issues intersect.

This situation exposes the complexity of working in an environment where ethnic backgrounds and political beliefs intersect. It is a microcosm of the society in which we live, and a reflection of the broader discussions that are being held in the Netherlands. For me, it was a moment of self-reflection, but also a chance to make my voice heard. And that, in a nutshell, is what democracy and pluralism mean.

So yes, this experience at the coffee table was a mirror of our society, with all its complexities and challenges. A reflection on consciousness and the choices we make, every day.

The Illusion of Colour Blindness

The statement "I just see you as a white person" is a fascinating example of how apparent neutrality in language can mask a deeper complexity. This is not so much a matter of colour blindness, but rather of social and cultural blindness. The idea of colour-blindness suggests an equality that is admirable in theory, but which in practice often becomes a subtle form of denial and exclusion.

This denial of ethnic and racial identity, often intended to appear non-discriminatory, can actually minimize or ignore the experiences and realities of people from different ethnic groups. It's about erasing the unique experiences and challenges associated with one's ethnic background.

What we see here is a reflection of a deeper social dynamic, where some feel comfortable to go beyond the complexities of racial and ethnic identities just to maintain their own sense of moral superiority or comfort. It is important to recognize that acknowledging someone's racial or ethnic identity does not have to be an act of discrimination, but rather an acknowledgment of their full humanity and the unique experiences they bring.

This situation also highlights the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of how we speak about race and ethnicity. It's crucial to strike a balance between acknowledging diversity and avoiding stereotypes or biases. The key lies in listening, learning, and being open to the experiences of others, rather than reducing them to a simplistic and colourblind view of the world.

A Sober Look at Zwarte Piet's Turbulent History and Future

In the jumble of traditions, legends, and historical facts surrounding Zwarte Piet, it is important to take a sober and critical look at the origin and evolution of this figure within Dutch folk culture. The debate about Zwarte Piet has degenerated into a symbolic battle between different visions of multiculturalism, tradition preservation, and racism. This debate requires a thorough analysis of both the historical facts and the cultural context in which this tradition has developed.

First of all, it is important to recognize that the figure of Black Pete as we know it today is a product of the 19th century, specifically introduced into popular culture by the book "The Feast of Sinterklaas" in 1891. The origins of Zwarte Piet apart from Sinterklaas, as an assistant who takes on both reward and punishment, is a relatively recent development in the long history of the Sinterklaas celebration.

The defence of Zwarte Piet with arguments that refer to the victory of Christianity over Islam, the style of dress of pages in the Middle Ages, or the character as an emissary from Spain, are attempts to give the figure a deeper historical or cultural legitimacy. However, many of these arguments lack a solid historical basis or oversimplify the complexity of cultural exchanges over the centuries.

The argument that Zwarte Piet is a reflection of racial stereotypes that were prevalent at the end of the 19th century, in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in the Netherlands, cannot be ignored. The images and descriptions of Zwarte Piet from this period clearly contribute to the dissemination and maintenance of a specific image of black people, an image that fits within a broader context of racial stereotyping and discrimination.

In the current discussion, it is important to reconsider the tradition of Zwarte Piet in the light of contemporary insights about racism, inclusivity, and multiculturalism. It is possible to celebrate the rich tradition of Sinterklaas in a way that is respectful to everyone, by making adjustments that maintain the core of the celebration but at the same time distance yourself from elements that can be perceived as hurtful.

This is not about erasing traditions, but about evolving them in line with our growing understanding of equality and respect for all members of our society. The history of Zwarte Piet shows that traditions are not static, but have always adapted to changing social norms and values. It's time to take a critical look at this tradition and make sure it's a party that everyone, regardless of background, can relate to.

Confronting Your Own Prejudices 1

This incident on the way to the station was a sobering moment of self-realization. My reckless remark to a dark-skinned boy on a bus shelter - "get off that bus shelter, you're a monkey, aren't you?" - was meant in the moment as a response to alleged vandalism. But the impact of these words, especially when seen through the lens of race and skin colour, turned out to weigh much more heavily.

In hindsight, the possible racist connotation of my statement was unmissable. This moment of reflection took me back to my own childhood experiences, where I myself was the target of bullying by a Moroccan boy. Those events had unconsciously led to an aversion to Moroccans, a sentiment that I did not recognize until much later and tried to overcome.

As someone in a position of authority in the fire service, I realized how my words and actions, no matter how unintentional, can have a profound impact on others, especially young people. This incident served as a powerful reminder of the subtle forms of racism and the importance of awareness and caution in our interactions.

This experience has prompted me to self-reflect on my own biases and behaviours. It has taught me that it is essential to work on my awareness and understanding, not only for my own personal growth, but also to be a positive and respectful influence in the lives of others, especially those of the youth.

Confronting Your Own Prejudices 2

These thoughts shed light on a crucial issue: how we sometimes unwittingly contribute to conversations or jokes that conflict with our own principles. My experiences of making jokes about fish in a bowl, coupled with skin colour, were clearly moments of weakness. They reflected an attempt to use humour as a shield, or perhaps even as a way to compensate for my own uncomfortable experiences.

This self-reflection takes me back to my time in the service, where I faced challenges related to the colour of my skin. As the only black person during elementary training, where fictional graves had to be respected and where next to these graves stood a bowl with a white and a black goldfish, the repeated death of the black fish led to jokes that questioned both my skin colour and my ability to successfully complete the training.

Looking back on my own behaviour, I now realize that my jokes about the fish may have been an unconscious way of processing my experiences of racism and exclusion. It's a painful insight that these jokes reveal a deeper struggle. They didn't represent who I really want to be, nor the values I aspire to.

This form of self-reflection is essential, but not always easy. It allows me to acknowledge my own biases and weaknesses and take responsibility for my words and actions.

Epilogue

As we navigate our path through life, surrounded by the complexity of the human experience and the enigmas of our existence, we often reflect on the role we play in the larger scheme of the world. This document has sought to explore the profound questions that preoccupy us about justice, empathy, and our shared humanity.

The notion that we, as human beings, are somewhat uprooted, not fully fitting within the natural order, reflects a profound sense of displacement many of us experience. This feeling, amplified by the awareness of our own shortcomings and the impact we have on the world around us, evokes a desire to contribute, to provide something of value that justifies our presence.

Understanding the world after a significant upheaval means recognizing that we are constantly striving for meaning and connection in an era often characterized by division and misunderstanding. This document is a reflection on that quest, an attempt to connect the echoes of our collective past with the hope for a future where justice, understanding, and compassion form the core of our coexistence.

Sharing these reflections, thoughts, and stories is an invitation to everyone reading this to engage in an ongoing dialogue about how we can together build a world richer in understanding and compassion. It is a call for each person not only to reflect on the world as it is but also to commit to the world as it could be.

As this document draws to a conclusion, the journey it represents is far from complete. It is a step on a path towards greater awareness and active participation in the ongoing fight for a more just and empathetic society. It is my sincere hope that the words laid down here not only resonate but also inspire reflection, conversation, and ultimately, action.

With a heart full of hope and an eye towards the future.

DE TYRANNY VERDRYVEN⁶

"Thou art my shield and reliance,
O God, my Lord,
Upon Thee do I wish to build,
Forsake me nevermore.
That I may indeed remain faithful,
Thy servant at every moment,
Drive away the tyranny
That pierces my heart."

⁶ The term "De Tyrannie Verdryven" refers to the fight against oppression and tyranny, and finds its origin in the Dutch national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*, and has also been incorporated into the Resistance Memorial Cross, an award given to members of the Dutch resistance during World War II (1940-1945). This phrase symbolizes the resistance against the occupation by Nazi Germany and the broader pursuit of freedom and democracy. In the context of the Resistance Memorial Cross, this term is used to acknowledge the essential contribution of the resistance to the tyrannical domination during World War II. The use of this term in the title of a document against racism emphasizes the ongoing struggle against all forms of oppression and discrimination, and calls for action to expel tyranny, in any form, from our society.